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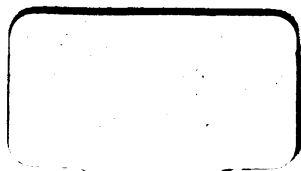
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FROM AN
AMERICAN SOLDIER
• TO HIS FATHER •

CURTIS WHEELER
2nd LIEUTENANT OF FIELD ARTILLERY, U.S.A.



1897-1900 - *Am. ...*



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ETER



*Letters from an American Soldier
to His Father*

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CURTIS WHEELER
Second Lieutenant, Field Artillery, U. S. R.

LETTERS FROM AN AMERICAN SOLDIER TO HIS FATHER

By

CURTIS WHEELER

Second Lieutenant of Field Artillery, U. S. A.

FRONTISPIECE PORTRAIT OF AUTHOR

INDIANAPOLIS
THE BOBBS-MERRILL COMPANY
PUBLISHERS



Major, U. S. R.

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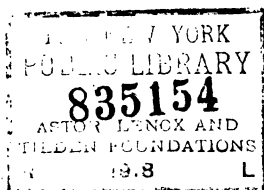
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PREFATORY NOTE

These letters were written with no thought in the mind of the writer of their being published. The personal note is obvious in them and no attempt has been made to edit it out. The editing, in fact, has been of the slightest. About all that has been done is to give initials in place of names where persons are mentioned by name, to give a heading to each letter, and to eliminate here and there a personal reference that would be blind to the reader. Otherwise the letters are just as written—the fresh, spontaneous, unconstrained narrative of personal experiences that link themselves up closely to a million American homes from which boys have gone to prepare themselves for similar experiences.

Lieutenant Wheeler was one of the contingent selected from the first Plattsburg camp to be sent abroad for three months' study, close up, of modern warfare. Prior to his Plattsburg experience he had spent four

12 x 7, may 2/18.

PREFATORY NOTE

months on the Texas border in Battery C of the First Illinois Field Artillery. Before that, while a student at Yale (class of 1911), he had joined a troop of cavalry then in training in New Haven, maintaining his connection with it for two years while still pursuing his academic course.

It is hard at times for parents whose boys are called to the service of their country to view the situation through the eyes of the boys themselves. These letters may help them to do so. They are so full of the joy of life, the spirit of high adventure, so blithe and buoyant, that their gaiety becomes infectious, and one is inevitably reminded of Wordsworth's oft-quoted lines:

"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very Heaven."

E. J. W.

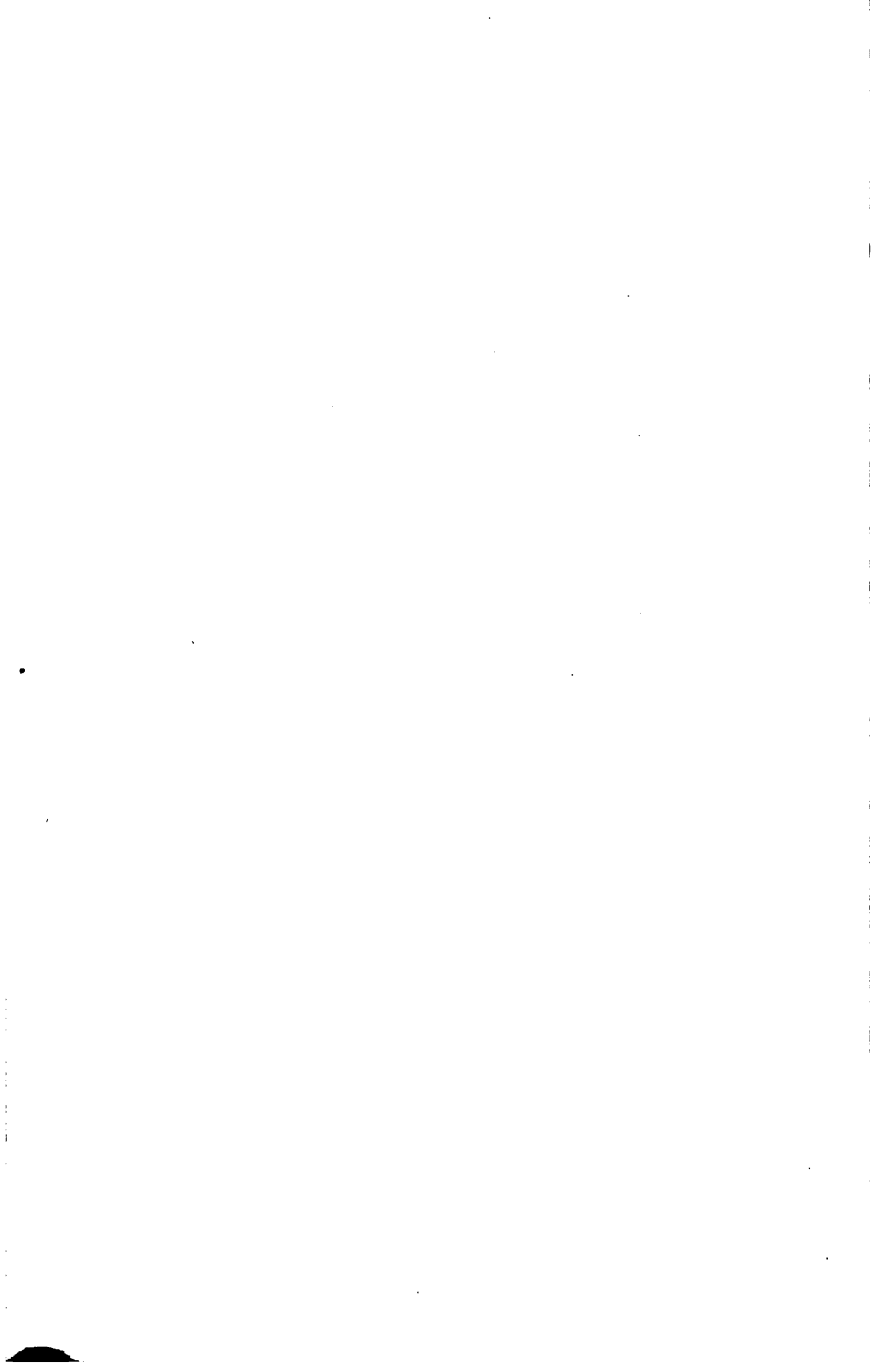
MEMORANDUM

ON THE LETTERS OF LIEUTENANT CURTIS WHEELER

As the officer in charge of the Press Division, A. E. F., which reviews all matter about the A. E. F. intended for publication, I have read the letters, fourteen in all, with the liveliest interest and appreciation. They form a message of spirit and cheer from France which should be of genuine service. Of course, the author will have to comply with the regulations about officers writing for publication which have been issued by the War Department.

FREDERICK PALMER,
Chief of Press Division,
I. S. G. S., A. E. F.

February 10, 1918.



*Letters from an American Soldier
to His Father*

**LETTERS FROM
AN AMERICAN SOLDIER
TO HIS FATHER**

OFF FOR FRANCE

DEAR DAD:

I don't suppose you'll get this letter for some time but it's rather interesting to be able to write you *in medias res* this way. The luck of Fuzz and myself still holds. We are at the most interesting table you can imagine and we sit till all hours talking. It includes a Peeress, two very pretty girls, a Colonel, a Captain, a much traveled gentleman on his way to the Lord knows where, and us two humble young men.

The first lady is charming and her incidental conversation of events and places and personages is enthralling.

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All the other people have had important things to do in the world and are about to do still more, and the result is better than Galsworthy or Carlyle. We have such a good time we stay together quite a lot and I haven't gotten to know many new people as yet. But there are lots of my old friends aboard, and we sit about and speculate and take sun baths and listen to the band, and it is altogether charming.

I wish I could tell you where we are now, or what is going to happen next. But the first is forbidden and the second I can only guess at even if it too were not forbidden. Suffice it to say that no company from the beginning of the war was ever better taken care of or stood better chances of reaching its destination.

Furthermore we eat luxuriously (for me) and we sleep well o' nights despite the more obvious precautions. We have music (Kipling's *Broadwood*) and

LETTERS FROM AN AMERICAN SOLDIER

pretty girls, and a library and people from all over the world to talk to. Arnold Bennett, I believe it is, says the casual conversation in the smoking room of any big liner is worth the whole trip to Europe. If that is so, my last two days have been worth three or four Grand Tours.

It is crisp and cold outside and the mellow golden sunlight of the northern latitudes is pouring down upon us and the mirror-like green water. Some one in the next room is lightly running over part of the *Peer Gynt* suite on the piano, and outside the young men are trying their shiny yellow field glasses on everything in sight. Presently I shall go outside, snuggle into a steamer chair and hear all about the last ice carnival at Ottawa, or who really first entered the city of Peking in the Boxer affair, or something interesting and recent about the Duke of X's last house party. Then Fuzz and I will run around the deck in

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this gorgeous football weather, go through a boat drill, study a little French, play a little bridge and roll blissfully to bed with the prospect of an icy salt-water plunge in the morning, having eaten another meal reminiscent of Cox's Hotel on Jermyn Street.

So when people talk to you about the terrific nervous strain of crossing these days and the dreadful hardships "our boys" undergo, wave this letter before them and read as much of it as the censor has allowed to get to you, and I dare say that's all of it, and silence them utterly and forever. For it is of a truth that this is so far neither more nor less than a super house party and bids fair to stay so for some time to come.

I find that when we get to our destination, I shall be meeting some old friends who are close associates of my new friends and I expect I shall have a great many very interesting things to tell you. I only wish I knew just how much I

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shall be permitted to say. The names are rather exciting.

How are you, Daddy dear? Are the mountains as gorgeous as ever and do you like the Happy Valley just as much? I hope you are still up there getting all kinds of exercise and enjoying yourself as much as I am. If you expect, however, to get as much fun out of the next few months as I shall, you must go some.

Yours in high spirits,
Curtis.

ON THE WAY OVER

DEAR DAD:

My imagination was always rather captivated by the prayer in the Anglican service for "all those who pass upon the sea upon their lawful occasions." But I never really felt how much it meant until it was read this morning by the old ship's doctor, as our tall ship swayed in the white-crested Atlantic rollers. It was altogether a strange and rather interesting service. The people on their knees swayed back and forth to the roll of the ship and the steward at the piano slid back and forth on his stool.

Outside, the life-boats hung out over the water creaked an accompaniment, and the life-belts piled at the companion-way slid a little on the floor every once in a while. And we sang three or four

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of the old hymns about the sea, and it all seemed quite right and proper that I should be there and that all the others should be there.

I have gotten my sea legs quite nicely by now, and although to-day has been a bit rough a few friends and I have done about everything there is to do, from riding the mechanical horse in the gymnasium way down below decks to playing tennis on the hurricane deck with a bit of rope.

This letter is a bit disconnected because in the next room a lot of my friends are singing *Mandalay*, and *Gentlemen Rankers* and the *Gypsy Trail*. Those songs have come into their own with us. They express so well the feelings we all have as we go tearing through uncertainty on what errands we know not. The first wild exhilaration that came to us as Fire Island Light sank into the sea has settled into something steadier and more prosaic. But

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it has given a lift of enthusiasm to steadily and surely serve us to the end of our various trails.

The concert occurred last night with great éclat. It contained all the usual things—songs, dances, monologues, humorous gibes at various officers, and one serious address by one of the finest men in our service. What he is colonel of I can not tell you, but I can assure you that he will be heard from later. Everybody enjoyed the concert, I think, and we are going to give another one later for the enlisted men as well as for the others. They contributed some of the best numbers to this concert, and it is only fair.

I told you how interesting this trip promised to be. It is proving to be much more than that. I could never have gotten so intimate an idea of Canada and of the real folks that make it go any other way. A lot of those people, Laurier, Borden, Lord Strathcona, Lord

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Mountstephen, Sam Hughes, and many others are real living figures to me now.

Talk about empire builders! This man Donald Smith, once a barefooted Gaelic kid from a little Highland town, qualifies as well as any of them. Imagine being a fur company's factor for thirty years in the wilderness of The Labrador, with one mail a year, and then suddenly coming out the owner of the Hudson Bay Company and proceeding from there with all Canada to work in. Fancy having a big share in the development of two transcontinental railroads, developing whole provinces at a whack, building banks where you pleased, equipping and sending a regiment of horse to the Boer War, and ending up with one of the few really earned peerages in the British Empire.

Stories like these I hear in disconnected form at dinner, on deck, at cards and in the lounge in the evening. Naturally I am very much impressed and

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thrilled. Perhaps it is more the way these stories are told than the material of them, but anyway I am having a very splendid time with it all.

Lady D—— is a very remarkable woman, and it is worth being sunk to know her. She reminds me quite a little of Miss Ida Tarbell, except, of course, that she is slightly older and has been part of more big things upon which to base a philosophy of life. In going back she is showing the highest kind of pluck. Her son was killed at Ypres and his wife and son, whom she is leaving behind, are absolutely all she has left in the world. Aside from whatever risk there may be in traveling, she is surely and certainly giving her life for wounded Canadians in London every day, for the expenditure of her energy and vitality must be terrific.

I'm not going to talk about any more people to-night. There are lots of interesting ones, and I'll tell you about them

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in other letters or perhaps I'll save them to yarn about to you in three or four months. Meanwhile, I think I'll read a little Barrie, take a turn about the deck, and so to bed. Jove, these walks on deck at night! Stars and clouds and the heaving waters and the black shapes of lightless ships, headed the way of many ships before but meaning, I hope, more. May they be swift shuttles of an empire's loom, weaving a shroud for monarchy and tyranny and frightfulness this our poor little world over.

Good night,
Curtis.

NEARING THE DANGER ZONE ZONE

DEAR DAD:

I do wish I could tell you what part of the North Atlantic we now inhabit. It is certainly most interesting and exciting. We are gradually getting deeper and deeper in the various plans for running the blockade. I wish I could tell you them, too.

And the rumors—glorious! After the tuppenny rumors of the Mexican border, this is like living in *The Three Musketeers*. I have about five prize ones which I have collected about the good old boat, and two particularly dreadful ones of my own. I ran into a sort of officer this morning who looked a bit jumpy and I handed him the whole lot at once. I really didn't realize what they would be like all at once, that way—

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Poe faded to a frazzle. The sort of officer hasn't been seen since.

As I write this letter, two people who have been in it the last two years are telling each other the most blood-curdling stories you ever heard. Great stuff! We are getting so we rather wallow in it at our table. The girls are much the worst. Half of it is in French. It sounds a bit more creepy that way.

My French is coming, too. We have French classes every afternoon now, and it is surprising how it begins to come back. I can go on for an hour of easy conversation without cracking particularly. My French really doesn't worry me so much as my American. There are so many English people about one gets rather in the habit of sliding into their accent and their way of talking. I hold my compromise Middle West accent as a precious possession and I should hate awfully to lose it.

The voyage, for me at least, has been

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a most glorious experience, and the crowd on board are developing all sorts of interesting traits. It is not, I must say, as good as Plattsburg. I'm beginning to be sure that that was the pick of the country. But everybody here has something or other to make him interesting. By the way, did I tell you that crazy cowpuncher Jimmie V—— is on board? You remember he is from Fargo, North Dakota, and lived with us in Evanston. He is an aviator with an ambition. He wants to do just one thing; he wants to get the Kaiser. I verily believe when he finally gets his little one-hundred-and-fifty-mile-per-hour S. P. A. D. the darned nut is going to head straight for Berlin.

One thing we lack is exercise. We have a kind of deck tennis, and the usual stuff, shuffleboard, etc.; but we all really need a good hard workout. There is a gym., but it is small and very stuffy and not very satisfactory. The thing

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that saves my life is a salt-water plunge bath every morning. That starts the circulation, I can tell you. It is rather necessary, too, as it is most bitterly cold, with snow and everything.

Beginning to find out where I may go. Told you one prospect. Two or three others of about the same nature, all equally interesting. Charming country, each one, but not much excitement. We shall see. At all odds, if I have no blood-curdling tales to tell, I shall be able to describe for you some beautiful parts of a beautiful land when I appear on the scene this winter.

Everything will be turned out in a minute, so I think I'd better close and take my farewell turn about the deck. Good old ocean, good old ships, good old stars! Three cheers for the long long trail!

Good night,
Curtis.

THE FLAMING TRAIL

DEAR DAD:

This morning was cold and quite clear, with a little breeze from the Pole blowing over the rail. The sun came up a flat disk of flame, and as it rose the whole East turned slowly from green to blue, to pink, to old rose, to flaming red. Then it was as if we were headed toward a great furnace whose flames stretched out towards us, and whose heart opened slowly wider and wider at the sight of so tall and gallant a ship.

Cast athwart the red glare of the furnace, black specks appeared. They neared us rapidly until we could see the white foam dashing upward from the high bows. On they came, lunging towards us, swift and keen and watchful. And as they twisted and turned on the high sea running, the great gorgeous

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East turned the snowy paths behind them to lanes of pink and rose.

There used to be some kind of swift hunting dog which hunted in packs, questing with their noses up. I thought of them and I was glad we were not quarry. On the contrary we cheered wildly, and they cheered wildly back, and then we lunged straight on into the flaming door before us, and a new day had begun.

Then I remembered the last land we saw, and how we left it. That time it was just before sunset, and the landlocked harbor was all placid and quiet and pink, against the blue hills that encircled it.

As the evening breeze began to sing through the stays, the anchor came slowly apeak and we bore toward the sea. From a little shack on shore floated an old faded American flag. As we came abreast, a woman in a white skirt and a yellow sweater dashed out in front of the

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house, seized the halliards and dipped the little flag.

The instant it dipped, our ensign dipped too, and the band crashed into *The Star Spangled Banner*. Every man on the ship came to the salute, facing the little flag, and there they stood, statues, while the band played and the ship gathered headway.

Suddenly we swerved sharply to the left and glided by a huge gray monster, decks crammed with cheering blue-jackets. We relaxed for an instant as our band ceased, then stiffened into attention again as it blared out *God Save the King*. Hardly had this ceased when on the other bow loomed up another gray shape, and our band swung into *The Marseillaise*. So we saluted America, England and France before we were really under way, with the whole shore now waving Godspeed.

Then from the distant ship came the notes of their full navy band, and we

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stood to attention once more to *The Star Spangled Banner*. And the sun, just before it sank behind the purple pine-clad hills, threw one red ray on the faces and lifted right hands of our ship's company. Then the music ceased, and we turned toward the ship's prow, beginning to plunge in the off-shore rollers, where before us, on over the curve of the black dark East, lay England and France.

But it was when we started our voyage that the East looked black, and this is what I remembered as I stood on the hurricane deck this morning in my clumsy life-preserver and looked at that indescribably gorgeous East. For now our way was lighted—none better. I think the light of flames is all the light anybody can ask for on a trail like ours.

I wish you were here, Daddy. I am going to sleep on deck to-night and I know you would enjoy it. It is a bit rainy, but we old campaigners don't

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mind that, do we? Lots better than a stuffy cabin, and, besides, I may be the first to see land. So you may picture me tucked warmly in a steamer chair, campaign hat over my nose, blissfully watching the fat black waves and the stars, if any, and then snoring off to sleep to the whine of the wind and the splatter of the spray along the rail.

Good night,

CURTIS.

END OF THE VOYAGE

DEAR P—:

This voyage has been a very delightful island of rest and companionship in a sea of war. Now that it is ending, I am almost sorry to have it so—sorry for an ending of the blue-black nights, when you never knew what lay beyond the frosty stars, and sorry for the lazy, sunny days when you yawned and stretched like a leopard in the sun. But now that is all over and we would not miss the next turn in the trail.

We have, meanwhile, had all that made the voyage over and back bully in the old days, and added thereto a faint hint of the spirit of high adventure always present.

Sometimes you hardly realize it at all. There was shuffleboard, and rope quoits and deck tennis and bridge and poker.

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There was the usual concert and the usual star who baulked at the last minute. There was the man who wanted to get up a little dance, and the man who wanted to get up a little bet. For hours things might be just prosy and contented and happy.

But you wore a gun and a life-belt, and you were ready to jump at the whistle-blast. Every once in a while the poker game would cease in the middle of a jack-pot, and the *Peer Gynt* suite would end with a crash, and the French conversation lesson would stop in the middle of the *Bon Marché*, and you would scurry on deck and watch the tossing, foam-streaked waves. A streak of foam may be the wake of a wave, and it may not. So we all had plenty of opportunity to use our shiny new glasses.

The ship's company was a fine lot of husky spirits, male and female, from stoker to commandant and back. It was like Plattsburg over again—the rest-

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less adventurers of half America, but added to them, the restless feet of everywhere else—every land and many services. I doubt if I shall see as gallant a company again in a long time. And yet I have felt that way so often in the last two years.

Meanwhile I am saying good-by to most of them as if they were old friends and I never again expected to cross the curious delightful roads they are traveling. But of course I do.

This morning I woke up in my deck chair and beheld, first of all the ship, I believe, the purple shores and hills that rose majestically one after the other, and then vanished in the green Scotch fog as we swept down the shrouded sea.

It was glorious to see this country which I love so well first of all in the Isles. I remember the last time I saw the headlands of Donegal go down into the sea I promised myself that, if ever I could, I should see that misty west coun-

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try again. Ireland, Scotland, Skye or Coleraine, it is a country to love and to go back to. God loves it none the less because He is always hiding it from His face with shining rain or purple mists.

So, now, that is the first land to greet me, and I am first to see it. It is very comforting to know that the wheel of Fate is swinging you along if things like this are to happen. I take it for a good omen. From now on I shall be content, knowing that I have only to bide my time and let it swing up into view, one by one, the friends I love.

Do tell me when you write, everything that is going on at home. How goes everything with you, P——? I do wish we could sit again on that high shoulder of Little Crow and look in rather a superior way down on the world. For presently I shall be too busy to look at anything, and a Second Lieutenant is superior to no one, not even himself.

LETTERS FROM AN AMERICAN SOLDIER

**Give all your family my best and
here's my best good luck to you.**

Yours ever,

CURTIS.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF FRANCE

DADDY DEAR:

It is rather too bad, isn't it, that as soon as things begin to happen rapidly one has no time to write? After all it is not as bad as it might be, because all the more interesting things of which I should like to tell you are excluded by censorship regulations. It is worse than it was because now we are all on honor not to put in anything, and I can not write as I used to.

Since writing my last letter the time resolves itself at this distance into a series of hasty pictures, already slightly blurred but likely to stay with me all my life.

There is a dock and a fog, and a racket and bustling about, and a cheery Staff Colonel, the father of one of the

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girls on the boat, who brought the atmosphere of big things very close.

There is a train tearing along through pleasant downs and tillages in the slowly deepening twilight, great black oaks on the sky-line, places we knew and loved before appearing suddenly in the gloom and flashing by. At the towns, groups of people, waiting for us to go by, to wish us Godspeed. The look in the faces of the old people I shall never forget. It made me stop and think a minute of just what we meant to them over here. I shall never have quite the same attitude of mind my letters on the boat showed.

The next is a cozy little seaport inn with one of those funny little sea-coal fires; sporting prints on the wall; tea and toast racks and bloater; a bustling, red-cheeked, black-eyed landlady and a rather tired Major of the Royal Something, not to mention a couple of gouty veterans of Kipling's India. We sat till

LETTERS FROM AN AMERICAN SOLDIER

way into the night talking of everything under the sun, and some day I shall tell you of some of those things.

The next picture is a sunset at sea, the boat rolling in a short, choppy swell, and strange things afloat on the deep and watching us from the shore. It was a page out of Wells. We were the playthings of giant forces, friendly and malign, that we knew not of, and so we cuddled on the engine room gratings and slept.

Another seaport town and another dawn, the gray light shining on gray deserted buildings and gray cobbled streets. Over all a slight smell of mould and decay; at the corner of a blotched plaster wall a figure in a huge dirty raw sheepskin coat, with long drooping moustaches, a battered helmet, and a long, long gun. Cats slinking over the cobbles, and far off the rumble of drays.

That first impression was not wholly right. Later there were gaiety, and red

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wine, and laughter, and couples strolling in the twilight. There were shows and stores and people shopping and taking their ease in their inn. But I shall never forget that first impression.

Have you ever had some one call you up in quite a cheery voice and ask you to drop around and see him as soon as you could? But when you got there, one look in his eyes told you that something was very wrong indeed, and you felt very glad you had hurried over and serenely confident you could straighten him out? Well—

But, as I said, that first impression later was modified greatly. I have talked with many people, at first hesitantly and awkwardly, later more and more surely, and I can close my eyes and see many of them now.

There was a little English Lieutenant with whom I had tiffin and with whose help I suddenly appeared where I was most needed with six motor lorries. We

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talked of everything from Harrow to Andover, and I hope I shall see him again. I liked the way he ordered Majors about, and he liked my command of taxicab French.

There was a little young lady in black, with a wonderfully trimmed poodle, named Piou Piou, who slept against my shoulder one rather long night. We talked about a good many things and Piou Piou was very much interested and nodded his head approvingly, but the rest of the compartment snored. Her father was a General somewhere, but whether she was somebody's widow or somebody's sister, I was afraid to ask. My grammar does not permit of very much tact.

Here I must add two pictures. This is a sunny Sunday morning and I am sitting outdoors at a very famous little iron table. It is on a certain corner which most people agree is the corner of the known world. But it is not the

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world that Mommy and you and I knew before. The cobbles still shine in the sunshine, and the boys whistle their newspapers down the Street of Peace. But it is a different street now. In the old days, at a ball in America, they said the contrasts were good because the women wore gaily colored clothes and the men wore black. On the Street of Peace, with its closed jewelry shops, the men wear uniforms of all nations on earth, and the contrast is reversed.

Another picture I want you to see is a little fiacre jingling up what to many Americans have seemed really Elysian fields. The sun shines on the people and the carriages and the fat green trees and fields. You could look up at the great arch that none but soldiers may enter and swear this was 1913.

But when you look closely at the people you may see clearly that these are Elysian fields in a different sense. For some are like the ghosts of what they

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were, or were commonly supposed to be, before. And beside others walk, almost visibly, the spirits of those who have left Messines or Vimy or the Bois le Prêtre for their own Elysian fields back home. The people so accompanied wear black, but they wear it very proudly and they look much the happiest. They smile and laugh and play with the children; but the rest, for some reason, apparently can not.

I must tell you of more people. There was a very bourgeois family, with baskets and two round-eyed husky daughters and an honest provincial accent, who filled another compartment on another train to overflowing and with whom young Daniel W—— and I conversed happily for hours. They wanted to know everything in the world, and they were very simple and naive and they all talked at once. They liked us very much, and were greatly surprised thereat, and said so; and if we had trav-

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eled further many kilos, we should infallibly have been married to the two round-eyed daughters who had previously supposed all Americans wore scalplocks and tomahawks.

There were two officers in the heavy artillery with whom we dined in a dining car. And they spoke with love and pride of their work and their men and their machines. And we also talked of many things as the flat rich land slid past. They drank our wine and we smoked their cigarettes and they said with many gestures, as they left the train, that we are all entirely brothers.

Then there was another General's daughter, an older one this time, with a husband at the front, who nursed men under shrapnel, and spoke Russian and even English. She had a very imperious way with her and a high-bridged nose. And she talked frankly about everything, now in French, now in English, and occasionally in Russian, though

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I believe she used the latter tongue mainly for swearing. She had a humble butler and a humble maid with her and they prattled freely whenever she chose to read. She was a very interesting young woman and I hope the son whom she frankly and confidently expects soon to have is as capable as his mother. He will infallibly become marshal long before the end.

Another picture:—In a crowded railway station, a refined high-bred little old lady dressed as a Mother Superior, face cut like a cameo, a sacred expression in her clear eyes, and two huge bundles at her feet. For some unknown reason she appealed to me and I got her two seats in an already packed compartment and we fell to talking of America. Her ideas of it were interesting. She had nursed in the war of 1870 and was now going to a hospital somewhere. A very interesting woman, naive and simple in many ways, but with a certain native

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shrewdness and lots of humor and common sense. In the intervals of handling a detachment on the train I had lots of opportunity to talk to her.

Then there were two subalterns of the Chasseurs Alpains, with clear blue eyes and weather-beaten faces—short, stocky men with bursting calves and shoulders and thick chests. Their talk and their manner was different from the regular run of officers of whom I have met so many, and they merit, I think, the name of their corps—*diabes bleus*.

I shall now describe you a school and bring my letter to a close. Imagine, if you please, the warm sunlight flooding down upon square gray buildings upon whose roofs pigeons sit and preen themselves and babble all day long. From the stables comes the peaceful sound of horses munching hay and stamping in their stalls. Through the shining white courtyard goes an old soldier in the red and blue of before the war, his uniform

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a pleasing spot of faded color against the gray lichened wall.

He passes out underneath a wrought-iron gate which bears the words "*Honneur et Patrie*" and the crossed flags of France and America. A great many men in that uniform have gone out of that gate, and on the wall close up to the mossy tiled roof is a tablet. It bears a date of long, long ago and beneath it the names of men to whom also the inscription on the wall has meant glory and death.

Gaily clad officers in the uniform of a republic pass in and out of the buildings. But to us from another republic there still seems to brood over them and the place in which we shall live the spirit of a little corporal and the guns of Austerlitz.

So here you may leave me, busy and happy and well, with boys I have known about me and something big to work for.

Your son,

CURTIS.

A DREAM COME TRUE

DEAR DADDY:

It is rather strange to keep writing into the empty air this way. I haven't the slightest idea whether or not you have received any of my letters or, if you have, how much of them you have received. For my part I have heard no word from any one in the States since I left New York more than a month ago. However I can not help but assume that all goes well, because it goes so well with me here.

For me it is a dream come true. I have health, wealth, work and, *çà va sans dire*, happiness.

Health because all the little things that go to make it up are perfect. Every new thing that happens, whether it be heat, cold, rain, fog, mud or just plain weather agrees with me just a little

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more than the last thing. If I ride all day, I am sure I should like to do that all my life. I have a horse who sympathizes with me and acts like a kid all over the lot. He has a sense of humor, and when he has done some particularly unaccountable thing, even for him, I can feel him laughing about it long afterwards.

If, on the other hand, I walk all day, or work in the shop, I come in with a Homeric appetite, eat myself into a state of anaconda-like somnolence, light a pipe and *je m'en fiche*, or, as the poilus say, *je m'en fou* about anything and everything.

If I spend the whole day boning on something, I arrive at nightfall with a pleasing mental tiredness, a desire to wander about this very pleasant country-side in the cool of the evening and then sleep like the drinking of the heroes of old, deep and long and loud. One also gets, in spite of the way we are

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often sat upon by Lieutenants and Generals alike, the lordliest, laziest contempt for the poor devils we left behind at Plattsburg, *et d'ailleurs*, who will have this work all to do six months or sometime from now. This, while not wholesome, perhaps, is very contenting. And one needs contentment when one is driven as we are driven, and has so very much to learn *de nouveau*.

I understand now the feeling of the French Capitain d'Artillerie who was kept in the States a month or two overtime on one of the missions, and who despaired because now he was so far out of date. Me, I have learned to shoot with a bow and arrow, and now it is necessary that I learn to handle a Winchester.

Be that as it may, you may be sure that I am very busy and very interested as the new things we must do and be slowly unfold themselves.

I said I am healthy; my weight is

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slowly going up and goodness knows where it will end. Everything I own now is tight to bursting. If I could stop eating, perhaps it would be all right, but when I see food I go wild.

I also said I was wealthy. Pay-day has finally come for us, and my money in French looks like a lot. Also a franc here turns just as many wheels as a dollar in the United States. Nevertheless equipment costs a great deal and I find there is still some for me to get. Thank Heaven, I don't have to buy more text-books; no one has time to write any.

For happiness, in addition to my health, wealth, and work, I have new sights, new sounds, new tastes, and another language to play with. For instance, I have talked practically nothing else all day to-day and I sometimes actually think in French constructions instead of my own.

Lord love the people of this sunny

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land! They are so cheerful, so busy, so pleasant and thoughtful, through everything that could have happened to Pharaoh or Job. They always have time to stop and tell you how *brave* you are, or how *gentil* you are, or how perfect your accent is getting. They are always willing to help you straighten out anything and they never tire of explaining a thing to you, no matter how complex. Sometimes they carry it almost too far. I have seen a whole village stop work for the day and start in to explain something en masse. That is a bit embarrassing, but I find a good wide grin will get you almost anywhere.

This afternoon Warren R—— and I got off and rode to a certain famous town. We wandered about the queer crooked streets till dusk, had dinner at the hotel, at a long table at which every one discussed everything in the world, and smoked cigarettes, and

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sipped café in the hall, with more discussion.

Then we went out to buy something or other, got lost in the dark and wandered for an hour. I remember particularly one crooked cobbled street which led up a steep hill. There is one pale street light at the foot and one half-way up. The latter was hung from a wrought iron bracket and lighted a beautifully carved door, above which was a coat of arms. To the right, the black winding alley with the black houses frowning down upon either side. To the left, the black roofs of the sleeping town. It needed only that the door should open and close with a crash and there, sword gleaming in his hand, plumed hat awry, should stand D'Artagnan crying "*Qui demande un Mousquetaire du roi?*" So from the middle of the seventeenth century I send you my very best, Daddy dear.

Yours,
Curtis.

IN A FRENCH ARTILLERY SCHOOL

DEAR P—:

It is getting rather late, and my bunkie, like the old soldier he is, has turned in. I think I will write you a little note and censor a batch of soldiers' letters before I do the same.

I wish you could see my cozy little quarters as I sit here writing. I have a cheerful little stove which roars itself red hot and then roars itself completely out if not continually watched. The stoker keeps bringing in wood (most of it wet), but the little stove is insatiable.

Then I have many nails on which to hang things, and as I sit here I am completely encircled by them. A curious looking lot they are, too. There is a canteen, a pair of very dilapidated saddle-bags, and a toilet kit, and a nose-

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bag and a very muddy trench coat, and a Sam Browne belt with various things ingeniously tied to it, and a pistol belt, and a woolly coat, and various other junk.

Come to think of it, I don't believe I wear a single thing that we wore in New York as new officers. Everything is different. We have high laced boots with broad splay toes, and thick baggy woolen breeches, and camel's hair sweaters and chamois sleeve waistcoats. Even our headgear is different.

And my! how much more comfortable it all is! I don't believe I shall ever be able to wear ordinary civilian clothes again, or a regular uniform. We go blessedly light on the formal stuff here.

We have all more or less caught our breath after the remarkable change in our military careers, and are getting pretty well shaken down into our various jobs. That there were several of us helped a lot, and everybody has

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been very good indeed to us. It still seems almost a dream, but it is rapidly becoming a reality. Quite a reality.

I wish I could tell you about the various things I have had to do. And I thought I knew what a soldier had to do. My word, they are almost as extraordinary as my life between the boat and here. Well, I'll be able to tell it all to you some day, only, if they keep piling up this way, it will take some time.

Yesterday we were in a very old, old town and we saw many things which would identify it and upon which the censor with his shears would descend. But there was one thing which will not identify and which I may describe to you. That was a very beautiful church.

We went in during Mass and watched it through. It was my first experience of this kind and I shall not forget it. The sonorous Latin chant, beginning way off and ending with a grumble of

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responses clear across the nave to us; the light filtered through priceless stained glass, on golden ornaments and white and scarlet robes; the keenly chiseled face of the Cardinal and the shining heads of the altar boys, all formed a glorious picture. It stood out against the great background of the congregation like some gem against a background of velvet. It was an old, old jewel with a setting of new, new black.

We waited while the procession filed out, standing at attention. The old beadle, with his three-cornered hat and his tail coat, limped as he went along and at his breast was a speck of red ribbon. As the old Cardinal came by us, blessing the heads of the children, he looked over, bowed gravely and then flashed us a smile. I think he was very, very tired; but he smiled, it seemed to me, hopefully. At least I like to think so.

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I like to think I know France a little better and I think she is very much worth what we are trying to give her. I am rather glad that every night we stand out at the front of our companies and batteries and hold the same salute for *The Marseillaise* that we hold through *The Star Spangled Banner*.

Now I must censor those letters (bless them for the queer little dramas they unfold) and get to bed. For at dawn my orderly will be waiting with my crazy ambitious horse and I will be off for another day of wild surprises. The orderly, by the way, is a fresh, frank-faced country boy from Iowa and apparently his great ambition in life is to get that horse all to himself in about a thousand miles of open country.

So, for the present, good-by and good luck.

Yours,
Curtis.

WITH THE FIFTH FIELD ARTILLERY

DEAR DAD:

It is a glorious, clear, cold night, with the tang of the Berkshire hills in the air. A moon is shining on the valley spread out before us, turning the lowlands into shimmering lakes of pearl and grey.

My bunkie and I have been standing on the porch of the "Mess des Officiers," listening to our band play Wagner and Verdi, and all the rest. Now we are sitting on our locker trunks by a cozy little red hot stove, writing away to beat the cars.

It appears that my schooling is not to be all in one place, and that we are to be given an opportunity to learn many things they haven't yet found time to put in books.

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For my life, it is quiet, methodical, and not particularly exciting. Every morning at seven my mounted orderly brings a great big, coal-black mare around to my door, and we go smashing out across the valley for a long busy morning out of doors.

I come back, hungry as a lion, to a mess crowded with enthusiasm and good spirits, and talk of our various jobs of the morning. After lunch, we get together for some more talk, and then off again. There are lectures, and drills, and lots of study, in addition to the regular military duties that devolve upon us. In other words, we are students and executives at the same time, and the combination is wonderful. I can truthfully say that, aside from the fact of not hearing from you, I have never been happier in my life.

The associations here are wonderful, as fine a lot of men as I have ever known, and they have been very fine about mak-

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ing us feel at home. Concerning the regiment itself, I don't need to talk. You have heard me rave about it a good many times at home, I know. My being with it, no matter for how long, is a dream come true.

You know as well as I do that a regiment is a complete little world in itself, with its base and outliers and all the rest. I could ask for no better microcosmos in which to live than the one I at present inhabit. I am studying exactly what I came over here to study, and in exactly the way I wanted to study it. To say that my opportunities are exceptional is putting it very mildly. It just happened that the thousand-to-one off chance came true, and I am a very lucky boy.

Fuzz is another of my many, many bunkies of the past. I had hoped that we would stick together, but of course lightning can't be expected to strike twice in the same place. He also is

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very happy and very busy, and probably learning much more theory than I. When we change places, he may be better off than I; but I'm content, enormously content, at present.

My present bunkie, Henry P——, is a Tennessee mountaineer with whom I got into a terrific row over a lot of motor trucks, one rainy dawn way back yonder. We both handled the situation so well that we have been pals ever since. He is a lean, weather-beaten type of the kind Remington used to do. He used to be color sergeant of the Sixth (the old horse artillery) and was commissioned First Lieutenant last spring.

He is weak on mathematics and book-larnin' generally, and I coach him. In return I get all the old army tricks he has learned in fifteen years' service as caisson corporal and chief of section and stable sergeant and the Lord knows what all. You couldn't ask for a better combination than that, could you? He

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knows all the old officers in the service, not to mention the non-coms, and has been through the mounted service school at Fort Riley.

On the other hand, I seem to know half the new officers, and I also know French. My French deserves a paragraph all to itself. It has never failed me yet. It goes deeper than the language; I get along beautifully with the people themselves. I wish I could tell you of all the delightful experiences I have had and all the charming towns I have seen already.

But that will have to wait till another letter or until I get back home to tell other people what I have learned. I've learned a lot. Meanwhile I shall have to censor a batch of letters and maybe write one to P——, and it grows late. That is for me it is late—nine o'clock.

Now, could you ask for better news of me, Daddy, than this letter holds? Only send me good news of yourself,

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bless your heart, and my happiness will be complete.

I was thinking to-day of our motor trips to Washington and Placid and what a good time we had together. We've had some pretty good times together, haven't we, we and Mommy? I often think of Mommy and wonder how she is. I know she must be pleased to know how contented and busy and happy I am. Bless her heart, I wish I could talk to her, and tell her all about my funny adventures and see her face light up. But I think of her a lot and that's almost as if I were talking to her, isn't it?

Good night, Daddy, God bless you and keep you.

Your son,

Curtis.

A NIGHT EXPEDITION

DEAR DADDY:

The last time I wrote you, way back in V——, I believe I told you I was a sort of observer with the Fifth. Observer? Ha! Now that we are back in winter billets I can afford to laugh, and you can, too. So laugh.

In the interim I have done about everything except command a regiment. Now that it is all over I am still a very meek Second Lieutenant with so many bosses that I hardly dare move. But, hell, I have lived!

At that I am still ordnance officer for the regiment, also wireless reconnoissance officer, in charge of the regimental mess (lots of reconnoissance there, too) and general goat. But meanwhile I have been everything.

It started one pitch-black night when

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I took Supply and Headquarters of the Second Battalion on a long hike to entrain for parts unknown. At the last minute they turned over a section or two from each battery so that I had about as much as a battery to pile out into the night with.

It was glorious. You couldn't see a thing, and all you could hear were the wagons crashing off the invisible road, and my beloved mule-skinners raising their voices to Heaven in heroic Gargantuan curses. I didn't think I'd use that Battery Commander's whistle you gave me for some time, but I used it that night all right. And what did my heart good to hear above all was the old familiar rattle, rattle of artillery collars and trace chains as the teams snarled themselves around trees or just bolted on general principles.

The Major who gave me the job said I had to break the record in getting there and in entraining, and by gosh!

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we did it—with the odds and ends of the regiment. I even had a dentist whom I made help load mules and a doctor who drove a four-line hitch and swore better even than my wagon corporal.

We were to start loading at four A. M. and we pulled in at three instead, after a long rest on the road, where my rolling-kitchen (after threatening to explode and give away the whole position) served us hot coffee and steak.

We had to wait while the outfit ahead finished entraining, but that gave me time to water the horses and put a few men under arrest and generally get things straightened out.

Then we pinned back our ears and went to it. I loaded horses at five places at once, mules at another, matériel at two and rations and forage at another. There wasn't much racket and while it looked rather confused it really worked out surprisingly well. I think

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I must have walked miles that night with a long whip in one hand and a flashlight in the other (sort of modern Simon Legree) prodding men out of dark corners where they had dropped to snatch a few seconds' sleep.

I recall having been decently civil to only one human being and that was the Major, who rode up to know how things were going. To him I smiled beatifically, waved my arm at the wild whirl dimly visible in the dark, and said everything was going very nicely.

He told me I was a damn liar, also smiled, and, like a gentleman, went away again to let me work it out. As it turned out, we came under the wire a half hour ahead of the nearest outfit. We were able to serve out a piping hot breakfast, and let all hands turn in to get some sleep an hour before the train pulled out.

My word, but wasn't it blissful to lie back on the gas masks and junk, and

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know that you had a good long rest ahead! Of course we had to pry horses apart at the stops, and all the usual things happened, but we didn't lose anything and came through in quite decent order.

We detrained after dark again with a lot of new and rather nervous officers standing around and telling us what to look out for. The reverse process was easier, of course, but I was held up at the end by an ungodly quantity of forage, which I had to invent transportation for. This took time, so I broke no records this time. I relieved my mind on my orderly. He went off a bank backwards in the dark, horse on top, and I cursed out his supposedly dead body until he and the horse climbed up together, both rather subdued.

Then we moved out, all a bit stiff and hungry, and hiked, and hiked, and hiked. We had a wooden guide with us. He looked quite imposing in occa-

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sional flashes of light—battered helmet, long drooping moustaches, jutting chin, calm profile, enormous horse, quite like one of the cuirassiers of Milhaud who went up the slope of Mt. St. Jean. But he knew absolutely nothing.

Well, anyhow, we got there eventually, and Arnold W—— met us with a cane and an English accent and was rather vague about billets, and I raised my voice and cursed anew. And he was as charmingly imperturbable as he always is, under fire or anywhere else, and eventually I found places for all the horses and all the mules and all the men and matériel, except myself. So I crawled into a fish wagon on to a sack of oats, and became blissfully unconscious.

Now it's getting late in this little farm house, and the fire on the great hearth is dying down and the snow is sifting against the window outside, so I think I'd best close this letter. Any-

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way that last paragraph sort of sounds like the end of a chapter.

I have three more chapters to write to bring me up to the present day. I got a lot of your letters in a batch and I have you covered up to your speech in an enlisted uniform and your entrance into the N. Y. Guard. Aren't you a nut—bless you.

I have heard about the Tammany election—disgusting; and various rumors about Russia—equally disgusting. Otherwise I buy eggs, and drill recruits and men with Spanish American War service ribbons, and ride insane horses, and try to keep a fire going in wet wood, and wonder if all my friends are as happy and lucky and contented as I am.

Good night, Daddy, and God bless you.

Curtis.

KING FOR A DAY

DEAR DAD:

I am tickled to death because I have just gotten my old orderly, Pietras, back. After my transfer back to Headquarters Company, I had to let him go, he being still in Supply. He came to me yesterday, however, and wanted to come back if I could make arrangements with his C. O. This proved to be quite easy and now I have him, for the present at least.

He is a tough-looking, saturnine thug, but he has never failed me and that is more than can be said of most dog-robbers. He is the man who went off the loading platform backward. He has risked his precious life following me in several places and, so far as I know, he is shrapnel proof.

Also, and above all, he was with me

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during my brief reign of glory. That brings me easily and naturally to the yarn I promised to tell you, entitled:

King for a Day.

When I woke up on my sack of oats in the fish wagon, I was very cold and unhappy. It was still dark, but I decided to start an investigation of my surroundings.

Behold a long line of covered wagons, mules and horses tied indiscriminately to the wheels, parked in what looked like the courtyard of a château. There was a fountain in the center where a badly damaged cupid distributed water in a bored sort of way over a moss-grown tank.

Everything was very sad and dismal, and dew dripped mournfully from the tiled eaves of the barns and the great house. There was the usual French smell, pervaded by fresh manure, wood-smoke, and mould. No sound save the

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munching of tired animals, an occasional snore from the covered wagons, and the twitter of awakened birds.

It occurred to me that my instructions to my non-coms had been detailed and explicit up to this point, but that neither they nor I had the slightest idea what we were supposed to do next. So I decided to have breakfast.

A very sullen sergeant and a very sleepy corporal and a cook who, bless his heart, has never failed me, stumbled out in the dark, after I had roared to my heart's content. In a few minutes we had the old rolling kitchen smoking away and the whole company out feeding and watering and cleaning up.

Luck was with me. With daylight came a nervous Major vainly searching for officers and wanting immediate action. This I gave him, also escort wagons ready for a long haul and supplied with rations and forage.

With broad day there was much rush-

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ing about, many reprimands, and some confusion. But by that time I had a little column all ready to send out, and I had given my wagoners explicit instructions just what to say and do under all the exigencies I could think of offhand at that hour of the morning. As it turned out, the way they acted on those instructions caused much amusement and some horror, but the result was quite happy. Whenever they meet me on the road now they grin and let a four-line hitch climb the nearest tree while they salute as mule-skinner's do not ordinarily salute.

Exit the column, exit the Major, exit all our local aristocracy. But behold me, created by the aforesaid Major a quite unwilling monarch of all I surveyed. This included a French village, a battalion of hard-boiled artillery regulars, more or less, and God knows how many horses. I never did find out exactly, they changed so from day to

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day; but I eventually brought back five more than the battalion ever possessed.

For the next two weeks this little town was mine to do with as I pleased—mine and a young man named Cholomendeley T——'s. He went to Yale in 1914 and used to drive an ambulance up and down the Chemin des Dames. The fortunes of war found him in command of the Headquarters Detachment at the time the column pulled out, and together we ran the town.

We had Lieutenants under us, occasionally a Captain, but no one ever disputed our domain. Majors, Colonels, or Generals passed through, or stayed with us a few days, but they never interfered. Eventually one Major came down to take charge, but the week he was there he let us go ahead as before, and appeared only at mess to kid us for working so hard. Subsequently he said many friendly things of us which have helped in strange places.

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I shall never forget that first morning I spent investigating the place in which I found myself. It was not, as I first thought, a château with its grounds, but a very famous stud farm. There was a large house, partly occupied by a very verbose French veterinarian and his family. In the rest of it I promptly located a kitchen, an office for myself, and one for T——. There was a huge court in back of the house, surrounded by stables, out-buildings, one dwelling house, and a riding hall.

In these various places we very cozily located the horses and men of some of the batteries, the blacksmith's, sadler's, and mechanic's shops and an assembly hall for the officers as well as the Battery Headquarters. I picked a huge saddle-room for my supplies, store-room and commissary and bunked my non-coms and mechanics in there.

In back of the first park was a huge

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open meadow, interspersed by clumps of trees and paddocks, running down to the river road, where were gravel pits and many graves. The whole was surrounded by a high stone wall with three lordly stone arches and wrought iron gates.

Later T—— and I did much to this place and every once in a while he recites Kipling's "When I was a King and Mason, a builder—" We built gravel roads and graded them, we laid out gun-parks where there was no mud (the curse of most gun-parks). We put guards at the gates in little sentry-boxes. We built us huge watering troughs, where scores of horses frisked and whinnied and kicked each other thrice a day. We had camouflaged grain dumps and hay dumps and other dumps. We did everything we had ever read or heard of, and we had a gorgeous time doing it. Of course we made many

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mistakes, but we never made the same one twice, and it was better than seventeen schools.

By the end of the first day, T——— was chief of police and I was town mayor. I had established more or less friendly relations with a retired French Colonel of Infantry, and he had found him a guard-house, a prison and a solitary cell that was the joy of his heart.

He took me down to view this cell the evening of the first day and I shall never forget my first view of the town itself. I had been roaring about the country all afternoon in a motorcycle establishing communication with the rail-end—and other places—and I had the consciousness of much work satisfactorily completed and my men comfortably settled and eating a real man's meal.

Our town was reached by a high stone bridge over a rushing river, by the border of which women still worked at

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their washing boards. The sun was going down in golden glory at the end of the street and it framed a high stone arch with a turret at one end. Beyond stretched the dark cobbled street, houses already shuttered up tight (as there was need), and the home-going laborers clippity clopped over the stones on their wooden sabots. Here and there a bent old crone with a staff carried a wrought iron lantern that went back surely to Henry of Navarre, or, better and more appropriately, to the Iron Duke of Lorraine. Over all pealed the *Angelus*.

The solitary cell was in the masonry of the arch itself. The thick oak door had three ponderous iron bolts and a little iron grating at the top. This was the only opening. There was a ring in the wall to fasten shackles to, and a string in the ceiling from which had formerly been suspended a loaf of bread—just out of reach. T—— mentioned with some regret that so far

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no prisoner was worthy this place, but that he had hopes.

When he subsequently found a man perfectly worthy (as the court decided), he used to stop in the arch every evening on his way home to dinner and listen to the man breathe!

This sounds a bit unkind, but is thoroughly typical of us. We were so enormously happy at this our first touch of real responsibility that, when we were alone together, we acted like two perfect kids. Each thing we did during the day, and we were kept terrifically busy all through the three weeks, was the subject for endless discussion at night. We fought endlessly all the time except when we were fighting some one else, and then we worked together as smoothly as two second-story men.

I think that is enough for this letter. There is ever so much more to tell you about our little town and the people in

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it and how we ruled, on the whole, quite smoothly. There were affrays, and night alarms, and one big fire at which we all but tore a building down with our teeth, and many, many more. But it will all have to be another story. I have to go out now and do a little arresting (nothing serious) and it will be late before I get in, and I have a big radio detail out to-morrow, not to mention a stable to move.

So for the present, good night and God bless you, Daddy.

Yours,
Curtis.

A LITTLE STORY-BOOK TOWN

DEAR DAD:

I have just come in from a long cold day on horseback and T—— and I are sitting by our cozy fire writing away. We have just been to a long conference at the Colonel's and taps has gone. I have to be up considerably before dawn and it'll be some cold, but I think I'll start another letter to you and finish later.

I left off the "King for a Day" yarn after crossing the bridge into our little town. I hope I'll see it again some day, with its river winding around, its funny little high-backed bridges, and its old gray arches. It also had a wall and turrets where the pigeons wheeled all day, and an old stone church in the mossy town square where a silver tongued bell

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woke up the sentry we posted up there, once every so often.

I used to see pictures of just such towns in my *St. Nicholas* when I was a kid; but I never in my wildest dreams ever thought I would have one all to myself to play with,—where I might ride out of a sunny morning on my coal black mare, a couple of orderlies clattering at my heels and the good folk taking off their hats and bowing as I cantered by.

You will understand that for a space of time I became a cog in a machine and that I thereafter returned to my Kingdom—my little turretted story-book city, with its winding cobbled streets, its mossy, besainted watering troughs and its street corner shrines.

After the second day, T—— and I combined forces and took the next best billet in town. It was with old Monsieur Gabriel, the white-haired schoolmaster. Bless his old heart, how he did love

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to prattle away to us, and how he did shut up and knuckle under when his wiry, energetic spouse appeared! To her we were a continual source of wild wonder. I explained to her at the very beginning that we were utter barbarians and she thereafter considered us the greatest wags ever. She used to pop into our rooms at all sorts of impossible times and nag away at us about our dirty feet and the dreadful doings of our orderlies and our uncouth habits of sitting on the edge of the bed, etc. Then she would rush out, wake up good Master Gabriel and repeat all our sayings at the top of her lungs. You could hear them gabbing away and roaring with laughter as tickled as a couple of kids.

I used to regale them both with long apocryphal yarns about Indians and buffaloes and gunmen and Woolworth buildings, in which I always made T—— or myself figure largely. They

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didn't believe much of it and I knew they didn't, but it helped my French wonderfully.

They had a little dog which always rushed out to greet us yapping tremendously. Then it would wiggle and growl and hop around, wild for notice. Occasionally old Maître Gabriel would meet us at the door, shaded tallow dip in hand, and drag us into the school-room. School keeps till eight in France and he would have a roomful of shining faced little rascals in black bombazine over-frocks and black wooden shoes. With us in the room he would orate at length in town-crier French, pointing out New York on the map, showing pictures of Brooklyn bridge and General Grant, and using us to point the moral and adorn the tale.

All this with heat lightning going around the horizon, grumble, grumble, and the nights occasionally interrupted by ridiculously impossible things out of

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the pages of H. G. Wells or the Book of Revelations. I used to wake up and laugh, they were so much like a congregation of irritable folk heaving the contents of a hardware store at a cat on a back fence. The cat would go serenely buzzing along the fence, occasionally heaving back an extra large dish-pan, and all hands would be highly gratified and call it a night's work.

You ought to hear the wind howl tonight. I'm getting nice and sleepy and I think I'll burrow on into my great big fat feather bed, open the window a crack, keep the tip of my nose out, and let her roar. For the present, with the wind howling down from the crystal-clear stars and the new moon shining on our snowy, hilly streets, good night.

Curtis.

P. S.: I add herewith a little Christmas message for all my friends such as I have sent out the last few years:

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The fire on the great open hearth is dying down. There is no sound save the snap of some dying coal and the distant grumbling on the horizon that is always with us. That and the singing of the wind on our great open hills are our daily orchestra.

It is a good night to puff on your few remaining flakes of the weed and dream of your friends way back in a land where everybody talks English and smokes good tobacco.

This, my Christmas message to you, won't get there till long after your Yule log has burned out. But it is none the less sincere and heartfelt for all that.

Know that we shall have made just as merry at the alien hearths as you at yours. We shall have dined just as heartily on our turkey or goose or bully beef with perhaps a little wild boar added thereto. And if the good old egg-nog be sadly lacking, there is always

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the merry amber vin du pays to cheer our hearts withal.

Here's to you from the bottom of my heart, wherever you may be and whatever style of clothes the chance of the moment may find you in. May they keep you as warm as mine and may you be just as glad to wear them.

Here's a toast to us all and may we meet soon to swap fearful and wonderful tales of the year that has gone and may all the things that have happened to you be as interesting as the things that have happened to me.

And now, clear and sweet in the frosty air, comes taps ringing down the windy hill—taps played as only they blow it who have blown more than good night. But the winter stars look down upon us snug beneath our warm tiled roofs and bid us a sparkling Good night.

Good night to you and a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

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*"God's benison upon ye all
That hold your heads on high,
Whose hearts are right and swords
are bright
When Yule-tide cometh nigh."*

THE END OF THE KINGDOM

DEAR DAD:

I was so busy with my little town, building a new water trough that would take care of fifty horses at once, repairing and adding to my stables, rebuilding a bridge that the Germans had blown up, and stretching out a smooth hard gravel road to the rail end, that it seemed almost a crime when orders came to pull out.

That night there was great excitement. We were dining with the Majors, who had just returned, when down the narrow cobbled street came a blatting fire-call. I had been thinking that that was the only thing that hadn't happened to us, so naturally I was tickled as a kid.

We first rushed out to the château to see if our beloved purlieus were un-

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touched. The fire wasn't there, so, leaving a trusty corporal and some of my wet wagoners with orders to douse any sparks that might land on the roofs, I went back to town.

I met T——— charging up the street at the head of one of those old-fashioned hand pumps you see on the fire-insurance ads.—“Running with the old machine.” It seems some quick-witted thugs in D Battery who knew the location of the fire house had run there and snaked the machine out while the local French fire department were up-stairs putting on their uniforms. The uniforms are rather ornate and apparently difficult to get into, for the men didn't arrive till twenty minutes later. They were wild at the loss of the machine, and I, of course, had to straighten the thing out.

Above the crackle of the fire and the noise of T——— keeping the bucket line marshaled, I could hear the roars

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of laughter of the Majors as I stood there dripping wet, filthy with ashes, a French fire helmet perched on my head, explaining the situation to a doughty French Colonel. It would have been much harder if the local fire department hadn't been palpably in such mortal terror lest we give them back their pump and make them work it.

Then I went back to where four or five wildly enthusiastic members in good standing of Battery F, a Headquarters horseshoer, and the mess sergeant of E Battery were tearing the burning building apart. The fire was on the second floor and we had long ladders with which we poked the ceiling apart. Then we would duck our heads while a shower of planks, burning hay and tiles roared down upon us, and go at it again. (Hence the French fire helmet.) Meanwhile three ex-members of the New York fire department played water from the "old machine" upon us and

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the building impartially, and a crazy crowd on the roof tore it joyfully to pieces. Eventually one of them fell clear through, missing me by a foot. But of course he wasn't hurt (the only thing you can hurt an artilleryman with is a bath), and, as he remarked to me from the ground, the roof was "finish" (supposed to be French) and it was time to come down anyway.

In the midst of all this, I heard cautious footsteps behind me, my helmet was lifted from my head, my campaign hat clapped on, and I turned just in time to see lurching frenziedly out the form of the fireman from whose head I had lifted it earlier in the evening.

It was unceremonious, but I couldn't help laughing because, after all, I hadn't been very ceremonious either, and I was unquestionably getting his nice shiny helmet very dirty. Outside I could hear the crowd roaring with laughter and cheering him for his brav-

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ery in finally entering the building. He certainly had it on the rest of the fire department there.

Well, eventually the fire was "feeneesh" and we all lined up by battery and the French Colonel made a long speech thanking us on behalf of the town, and the fire department trundled their beloved machine off to bed. As a party, the episode left nothing to be desired, but it was rather hard on uniforms. My nice English trench coat has never been the same since.

The next morning at "Boots and Saddles," I maneuvered so I could pull out my little command ahead this time, and it was very pleasant. We had no odds and ends to pick up for other people and we got off on a gorgeous morning with nothing on our minds save the rolling kitchen. Of course I had to find my way by a very weird map and I had to find forage and rations for the battalion

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somewhere on the road, but after our last hike this was easy pickings.

All went well and we even had time to shoe three mules and a horse on the road. This French mud pulls shoes to beat the deuce and I took two or three "chemin ordinaire" to cut off distance. We found our supplies on a siding about noon and all we had to do was to unscramble them and load up each outfit as it went by.

This put us at the tail of the column, however, and we (that is, Headquarters and Supply, of which they left me in charge) were quartered five miles farther ahead than any other organization. I thought we never would get there, up the most terrific hills ever. I wore out my nice pig-skin "persuader" on two teams of mules which I had to personally conduct up one hill. As you know, when a mule is "finish" he's finish and it takes a lot of arguing to convince him

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otherwise. I found my old border vocabulary coming back to me intact and we eventually pulled into town.

It was just getting dark and I was looking forward to quick billeting, a quick meal and bed. But that was not to be, for, as we pulled up in the main street, the old Fourth of July stuff started in the sky and every inhabitant disappeared in the cellar of his house.

Imagine the situation—a whole column in the open, and dust spitting all around you. It was bad enough for the men, but mules are valuable. I had two more than I started with and I wanted to finish with that record. So I gave the command to unhitch and lead into the nearest doorway. This caused confusion later, but it effectually cleared the street. Then I got the old rolling kitchen under cover, started a meal cooking, and went out to look for billets for the men.

It was the funniest thing you ever

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saw. I would knock on a door, hammer my stick to pieces, and eventually it would be opened a crack, always by a woman. "Where was the 'patron'?" "In the 'cave,' of course, *çà va sans dire.*" "Could I see him?" "Well, perhaps." Then the "patron" would stumble out of some subterranean grotto way below and I would ask him for "places" for the number of "hommes" and "chevaux" printed on his door.

Then in the midst of all this "Trrrrrrrrrrp!" in the sky, Roman candles and sky-rockets and set pieces, and then bom, bom, bouie, and then a roar that shook the cobbles in the street. At the first crack the door would slam shut and you could hear the "patron" crashing back down into his cave. It was so darned ridiculous I couldn't help laughing, but at the same time it was vastly annoying because I wanted those men to get a good night's sleep.

Finally Arnold W—— came to my

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assistance and between us we found enough places for everybody. I shall never forget the sight of him wandering in a bored sort of way down the street, swinging his stick and appearing in every particular like a country gentleman who had you out for the week end and took pardonable pride in showing you over his pet dairy farm.

As a matter of fact, half our labor was wasted, for my wagoners insisted on sleeping in their escort wagons. Either the Fourth of July stuff failed utterly to impress them, or they cherished the belief that army canvas will stop anything. As a matter of fact, it will stop shrapnel, even when it doesn't keep out rain. I suppose the shrapnel bounces and the rain doesn't.

For myself and T—— I found bully billets just over the stable in which I had the "Cuisine Roulant." It was a typical French guest room, which, for any one who has been over here, means

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a lot. There is no hut so poor it can't produce one best room, with a feather bed, and pictures of the family, and funeral wreaths of the departed. Most of the wreaths nowadays bear the date 1916 or 1917 and the inscription "*Tombé pour la patrie.*"

This room had two splendid feather beds and a fireplace and we soon had a roaring fire going. After going out to see how Pietras and the mare were faring (they nearly always slept and ate together and that is no reflection on Pietras), I turned in and made myself comfortable and waited for H——.

E. F. H——, Esquire, certainly deserves a paragraph to himself. He is a little insignificant tike from California with a funny wry smile, fearless blue eyes and a stubby red moustache. His father is a wealthy salmon packer or something and he came into the service, as so many of our best officers over here have come, by way of the American Am-

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bulance. He hasn't any Croix de Guerre (as most of the good ambulance men have), but he has been under fire many times and on one momentous night, at a place called Verdun, he kept the road cleared of crazy artillery horses and sent cannon after cannon loaded with H. E. down a road that changed its shape every minute under the German 150's. How he happened to be hauling H. E.'s instead of Grandes Blessés is another story which there is no space for here; but it is thoroughly typical of the choice aggregation over here we have picked up to fill vacancies, who are short on drill, long on nerve and blissfully ignorant of any precedents about anything.

I first saw H—— when the Major on one of the flying trips decided I needed another assistant and turned him over to me. I have had, since then, as many as seven lieutenants under me doing various things, but H—— was the best of the lot. That day I put him

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on the wood detail, that being the thing that was bothering me most. I had just come back the day before from an all-day hike to the Foret de ———, our only source of wood (and it is cold as the devil in that part of France). I had had two mule teams mired, broken a wagon tongue and sworn myself hoarse getting three loads back to the battalion. So I grinned to myself when I started H——— off with four teams at five in the morning.

But the wood wagon drifted in spaced just right and saved our necks, and H——— himself showed up with the last one at dusk riding on the box and driving the mules. As he pulled up, his horse, which was tied to the tailgate of the wagon, gave a tired moan, lay down on the ground and passed out cold. Never shall I forget the sight of H———, dirty, cold, tired, with his steel helmet pulled down over his eyes and that funny wry smile just showing

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underneath. It appealed to my sense of humor, so I left him on the wood detail the rest of the time we spent there.

Picture me now, sitting in front of my fire waiting for H——. I had left him behind with two freight-cars of junk I was sending on ahead by rail with my sergeant, for whom it was a punishment, and a corporal, for whom it was a disgrace. For H——, of course, it was just part of an officer's job, as I explained to him at the time. I shan't forget his expression then, either.

He had the same expression when he finally stumbled up into the room about ten. It seemed he had run into about the same party we had, only the sergeant and the corporal mumbled something about saving the horses and beat it to a "cave" and left him alone with his assorted junk.

The two remaining days of our hike were not particularly eventful. I re-

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member one delightful little town we stopped at where I got into a terrible fight over beef and bread. That was the same night some of my most lordly superiors (the "big oils" the French call them) appeared suddenly, gave me a champagne dinner and held a mock trial at which I, for once, was not the goat, and which I enjoyed hugely. Afterwards the beef and bread situation descended suddenly and clutched me by the throat, but in the interim I had time to observe the town.

It was much neater than the average—three real mansions—and was all cut up by funny little canals, through which ran wonderful cold, clear green water. The people were charmingly hospitable and when the old red guidon led the way out next morning the whole town turned out to wave us "*la bonne chance*."

And now we were come into a land of whale-backed hills and long undulating

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downs, very much like Sussex. These people, too, are shepherds and the gray brown of the treeless swales is broken ever and anon by the dirty white of many sheep. And from afar you hear, even above the sighing of the wind which blows and blows and never ceases, the bleating and baaing of the flock. The villages are little and old and gray, and seem to huddle away from the wind in little hollows, out of which you can see only the tall church spire rising against the cold blue sky.

It was just such a picture that greeted us as we drew near the place which the map said was Regimental Headquarters for the winter. One by one the various batteries had trailed off to their respective villages and I was now left alone with the Supply Headquarters detachments. T—— had been sent on a wild tear across half France (his subsequent story merits a separate yarn sometime). H—— was riding at the tail of the column watching sick ani-

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mals, and I was all by myself at the head as we topped the last rise.

There it lay, clear in the rays of the setting sun, a shining stream running through it, bordered by a few Lombardy poplars and the high-backed brown hills sheltering it warm and cozy from the everlasting wind. And on the wings of the evening came full and distinct the blare of our good old regimental band. Lord, how long had it been since I had heard that band? Ages ago it seemed, way back in good old ———, before I started on my mad career of crime. Well, it was good to get back to civilization after all. As my tired column strung out down the last slope, the music came to us distinctly and this is what they were playing:

"It's a long, long trail a-winding
To the land of our dreams,
Where the nightingale is singing
And a white moon beams.
It's a long, long night a-awaiting
Till our dreams all come true,
To the day when I'll be going
Down the long, long trail with you."

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We pulled across a high stone-arched bridge, past a carved stone watering-trough in which ducks splashed about, up a little rise and into the public square. I held my right arm high above my head. "Hoo-oalt"—the long drawn out call echoed in the square and then re-echoed as it passed down the line to where the tail of the column was still descending the last hill. I raised my hand again, brought it down to my side, the tired men slid off their horses and my reign as king was over.

The Adjutant looked up from his papers impatiently. "Wheeler? Oh yes, I remember. Glad to see you back with us again. Let's see, what were you with? Supply? By George, that's right. I'd forgotten. Funny it escaped my mind and I just assigned another man to that job. Well, you're in Headquarters now, some kind of paper work I believe. Bring anybody with you?

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Well, turn them over to their proper commands and I'll try and find you some sort of billets,—pretty crowded just now. Better report to your commanding officer right away. I think he has a lot of letters for you to censor. What was that you said, Sergeant? Oh, yes, and you're to stand all calls for the time being,—Junior Officer, you know. Good-by."

And as I walked out into the darkening square to my erstwhile command, I thought of the old, old story of the dog and the Second Lieutenant and I smiled to myself. I think under my tin hat I must have looked very much as H—— did when I left him with the freight cars.

"Bang" right between the eyes—and just exactly what I needed.

Curtis.

CHRISTMAS IN FRANCE

DEAR DADDY:

This morning at reveille the band marched through the snowy streets playing old Christmas carols and it was like some of the old medieval pictures. We look rather medieval now, anyway, in our hip boots and helmets, and, instead of campaign hats, the men wear a sort of Robin Hood bonnet that pulls down over the ears exactly like the old prints.

I dressed in front of a roaring fire which my man G—— made and called in the three little motherless daughters of my host. I had got dolls for them the day before and brought the package back on the pommel of my saddle through two-foot drifts. They stood in front of me like a flight of steps, short, shorter, shortest, mouths

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and eyes wide open as the packages were handed out. The dolls were rather expensive and did all the things a well-disposed doll is supposed to do and I awaited the opening of the packages with pleased expectancy. The littlest one opened hers first and it was a little Red Cross nurse and the results were amply gratifying. She giggled and prattled to the others and thanked me very prettily in her funny patois and ended with an enormous courtesy, in the midst of which she sat flat on the floor.

But when the older girls opened their boxes they didn't say anything at all. They just hugged the dolls and looked at each other for a while and their eyes filled with tears. Then they looked at me and smiled a little and cried a little. The two dolls were dressed in the native costumes of Alsace and of Lorraine. Finally the oldest one, who looks a good deal like the stained glass picture of Joan of Arc in the village church,

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thanked me in rather trembling French and they filed out solemnly to show their presents to the gran' mère.

I believe I enclosed in one of my letters to you a little Christmas message to send to as many of my friends as you could find addresses for. My anticipations were all fulfilled. Christmas day was a bright clear day with the sun shining down on the old, old houses with their snowy roofs and our winding hilly streets. It was just cold enough to make every one's nose and cheeks red and to put a snap in your step and a sparkle in your eyes.

We've been working pretty hard and there was enough to do Christmas morning so that when the young men began to troop into the mess shacks they had glorious appetites. I postponed the grand meal at the Officer's Mess to evening as we were all eating with our organization at noon.

I can tell you the men fared well,—

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turkey and ham and baked potatoes and pumpkin and mince pie.

The Colonel found time to get to every mess and make them a little speech, and a lot of the tough old bucks, with three hitches and their share in the guard-house, weren't ashamed to sniff a couple of times. He said that he was afraid some of them might be feeling a little lonely this day when they compared it with Christmas in the past, and he didn't blame them. But he wanted them to remember that the regiment was their friend and it was no mean friend to have. The Fifth Field Artillery has been a good friend to legions of mighty fine soldiers for many, many generations. Furthermore, a man could have just as many friends in the regiment as he wanted to make, for we were all by ourselves here and we must stick together. There were a few homely pieces of advice, and then he closed by asking each man to resolve to so con-

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duct himself in the coming year that it would not be necessary for hundreds of thousands of boys now happily at home or near home to spend such another Christmas as this in France next year.

I don't know what this sounds like to you, but the way it was said and the tone of voice gave it a very ringing quality. The Colonel is a fine looking man, clean-cut and wiry and hawk-nosed, and he has held unquestioned command over men longer than most of the officers you see.

I don't know whether I have said much about the men in this regiment. As you know, it has been a picked regiment for many years and the men have that look. They are practically all variations of one consolidated type. As I watched them during the Colonel's talk I thought to myself that I had never before seen so many faces take and re-

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flect the expression of one face. That, it seems to me, is leadership.

In the afternoon we all trooped into the stained gloom of the village church. And there, lo, a real American Christmas tree, towering into the chancel and laden with toys. Our red-faced old Band Sergeant was there in all his glory and the band blatted for all it is worth: *Carol, Carol Christmas*, and *Hark the Herald Angels*, and *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear*.

Before the tree stood one of our busiest Lieutenants dressed in a French improvisation of the good St. Nicholas. Before him huddled scores and scores of fat little red-cheeked kiddies marshaled by a couple of bustling, smiling Sisters. Backed by our good old Methodist Chaplain, with his long white beard, and the keen-faced, high-bred old curé, with his long black cassock (mutually unintelligible, but friendly), he made the kid-

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dies a speech in his Fontainebleau French and then called them up one by one.

Wars may come and wars may go, but these kiddies took me back to the Christmas trees we used to have in the little church at Westerleigh. They are all the same. Here the women wore black and there was no Frenchman in the church between the ages of fifty and eighteen; but the kiddies crowed and giggled or howled or shouted according to age and sex, and staggered eventually home with their arms full of toys and goodies, as happy as any kids anywhere else, I'll be bound.

I know the people of this town probably better than any other officer through my various jobs and my smattering of French, and I think I can truthfully say that the Entente Cordiale has received a boost in this little corner of France that it would take a lot to shake.

After the trees, there was a band con-

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cert in the square ending in a blare of glory, just at dusk, with *The Star Spangled Banner* and Mr. Rouget de L'Isle's masterpiece. I should like to paint for you the picture, but you can imagine it as it must have looked. There was the sun going down behind the black church spire, the shadows on the hills around all turning indigo and lavender against the snow, the crowd of people about the square, kiddies dancing and playing on the outskirts, women in the center, hands under their shawls for warmth, babies in wooden sabots at their skirts, French soldiers, "en permission," mostly infantry, with here and there the rakish blue tam-o'-shanter of a Chasseur Alpin or the red fez and crescent of a Chasseur d'Afrique, and, wandering through it all, benevolent, kindly, care-free, that greatest institution of modern times—the American buck private. With his hands in his pockets, jingling bokoo Frankies, a Christmas quid in his cheek

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and a Christmas breath floating mistily out into the frosty air, no Roman emperor has anything on him. He has a nod and a bong joo for everybody and he gets a smile in return, from the withered old gran' mère in the white cap and shawl to the flaxen haired lassie with the cold blue eyes and the warm white smile and the cameo features and the husky shoulders and legs, who rides by sitting sidewise on a huge white horse, her little sabots stuck straight out in front of her and her nose in the air.

The band was still going to it when I left to keep an appointment to tea. Monsieur M—— had very kindly asked me in to have a Christmas cake with him and I was anxious to see what a real decent better class French home would be like. Monsieur M—— is now, like many other people in this town, a refugee from further north, but with a difference. He lives with a relative—*chez lui*, so to

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speak, and is therefore a sort of king of the refugees. Before the war he was a big contractor at a place which is now as historic as Little Round Top, and he still has a very considerable fortune left to help his townspeople.

I found them all sitting around the fire waiting for me—two kids, the old gran' mère, the man himself and his little wren of a wife. He represents an entirely different class of Frenchman from the type around here (such as my present host). He has the long, straight, high-bridged nose, the broad forehead, the clear, wide-open eyes, the flexible expressive hands, that we have learned to recognize as the true French type at its best.

It was all quite formal at first. Then we sat down, there was a formal talk and the tea began. It consisted, first, of black pudding, or blood sausage. And you don't know what a relief it was to be with people who knew enough to be

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formal once in a while. I bowed and mine host bowed and his little wife smiled at me and pulled up a chair for me at the table. Then there were Lorraine tarts and honey cakes and a kind of light biscuit and some old, old cobwebby bottles full of a *vin* that never grew in this *pays* or this generation. After this was over mine host brought forth a jug of Mirabelle, which is a very delightful cordial, made from prunes, and we fell to talking about everything. It was a delight to talk with these people, their accent was clear as a bell and as easy to understand as English. They were so quick and responsive that, after those country people, it was like talking to a different race.

Moreover and above all, my bearded Hermes did not seize this opportunity to complain to me of the doings of some of my men or the evil habits of my horses. Instead he talked of Clemenceau, and

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the situation in Italy, and the movements of troops he himself had seen, and what his friend who is in the Assembly said about some one else in the Assembly who is not his friend, and so forth. And the little lady asked me questions about America, what Christmas was like there, and were my parents living, and was I married, and would I like the recipe for the honey cake, and what did the crossed guns on my collar mean, and was the American helmet as comfortable as the French casque, and would there really be five million Americans here by June!

The girl was really a young lady and it was beneath her dignity to talk to a sous-lieutenant, but there were some things she wanted to know. One was, Are American girls really all beautiful, besides being fabulously wealthy? Another was, How long had I been talking French and did I find it difficult to understand the patois of these people here?

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And the last was a wish that I had been able to visit them in their real home "*davant la guerre.*" Amen.

The boy, a thick-set youngster with a big square head and quick-witted eyes, opened up last, but was full of confidences about a friend of his who was a sous-officer in the Blue Devils. And he described with great interest the blowing up of their home, and the éclats of the obus, and how the Turcos cheered as they ran, and what knives they carried, and what he was going to be after he had gone to St. Cyr, and how *drôle* it was to watch the American *soldats* helping the French farmers kill their *cochons*.

It was all very pleasant and cozy and homelike and I shouldn't have missed it for a great deal. It made one feel quite like a gentleman again instead of a combination of Nero, Uriah Heep and Gyp the Blood. And the strange part of it all, I mused to myself as I plowed home

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in the night, was that a week before this same man had gone for one of our Battery Commanders with a long sharp knife, and this call of mine was the last stage of a rather difficult patching-up process. It is all a question of understanding, I reckon.

That night, at the Officers' Mess, it was very gay indeed. The walls were gay with banners and lanterns and Christmas greens. The Colonel's room sported the regimental standard and the colors crossed above a fireplace, which roared a cheerful Yule-tide warmth. The waiters wore white coats and aprons and jaunty cooks' caps and the tablecloths and cutlery shone spotless. The cook presided over a spotless kitchen, a grin on his face, and from it issued sugar-cured ham, crisp green salad, huge crisp smoking turkeys, fried sweet yams, stacks of flaky pumpkin and mince pies and piles of cakes. To top it all, we had

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fine juicy wild-boar steak and real American coffee from the States. We ate and ate and ate.

Suddenly, every one burst into song. The Colonel and the Battery Commander came in from the other room and it was such a scene as Kipling describes when he talks about the mess-nights of the White Hussars.

We sang some Christmas songs and we sang some college songs. We sang the famous epic which begins "A lady in jail, yes a lady in jail, with her face turned to the wall." We sang *Integer Vitae* and *Pack Up Your Troubles* and *Abduhl dul Abul bul Emir* and *God Help Kaiser Bill* and *The Long, Long Trail*. Then, as a final splurge, we all stood up and I started them off on *The Battery Mule* and *The Red Guidon*. As the last notes of that died away, here was the General, who was a guest of Colonel A——, calling for another song. And what should that be but our

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own song, the Fifth Field Artillery song *The Caissons*.

The General led it, as was his right, for was not he, too, an old Battery Commander of the Fifth? So for a minute rank was forgotten and we were all just brothers in the oldest and best regiment in the service. And I dare say the shade of our first Battery Commander, Alexander Hamilton, must have looked down upon us and smiled as we marched down the snowy street still singing, "And those caissons go rolling along, Keep them rolling, And those caissons go rolling along."

So ended a very happy Christmas for the Fifth Field Artillery. There was sadness in it, of course, for we're a long way from home and we hope to go much farther before they sound off "Dismiss." But me! I would change places with no man on earth and you wouldn't have me, would you, Daddy?

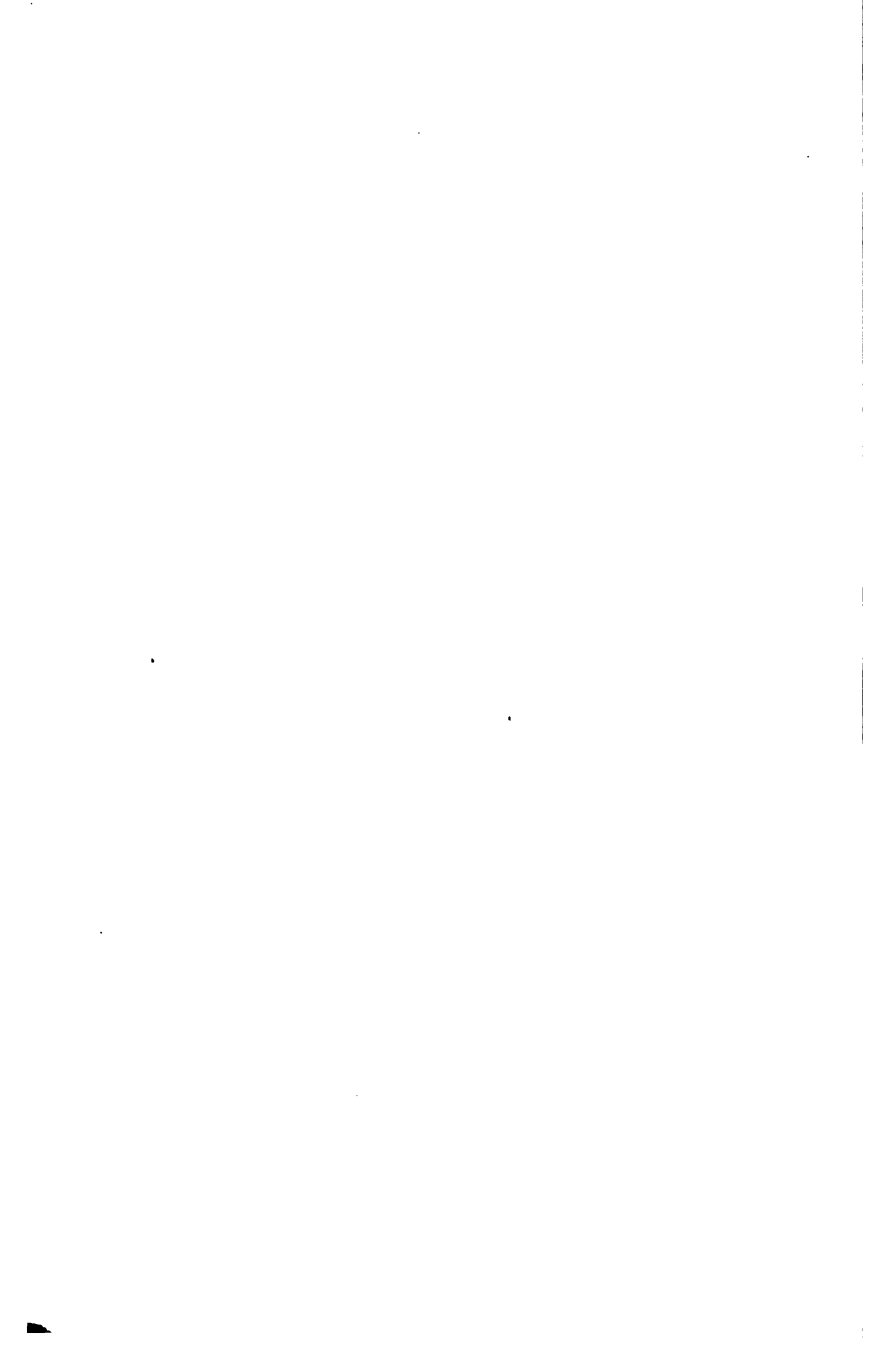
I got your box of Christmas things

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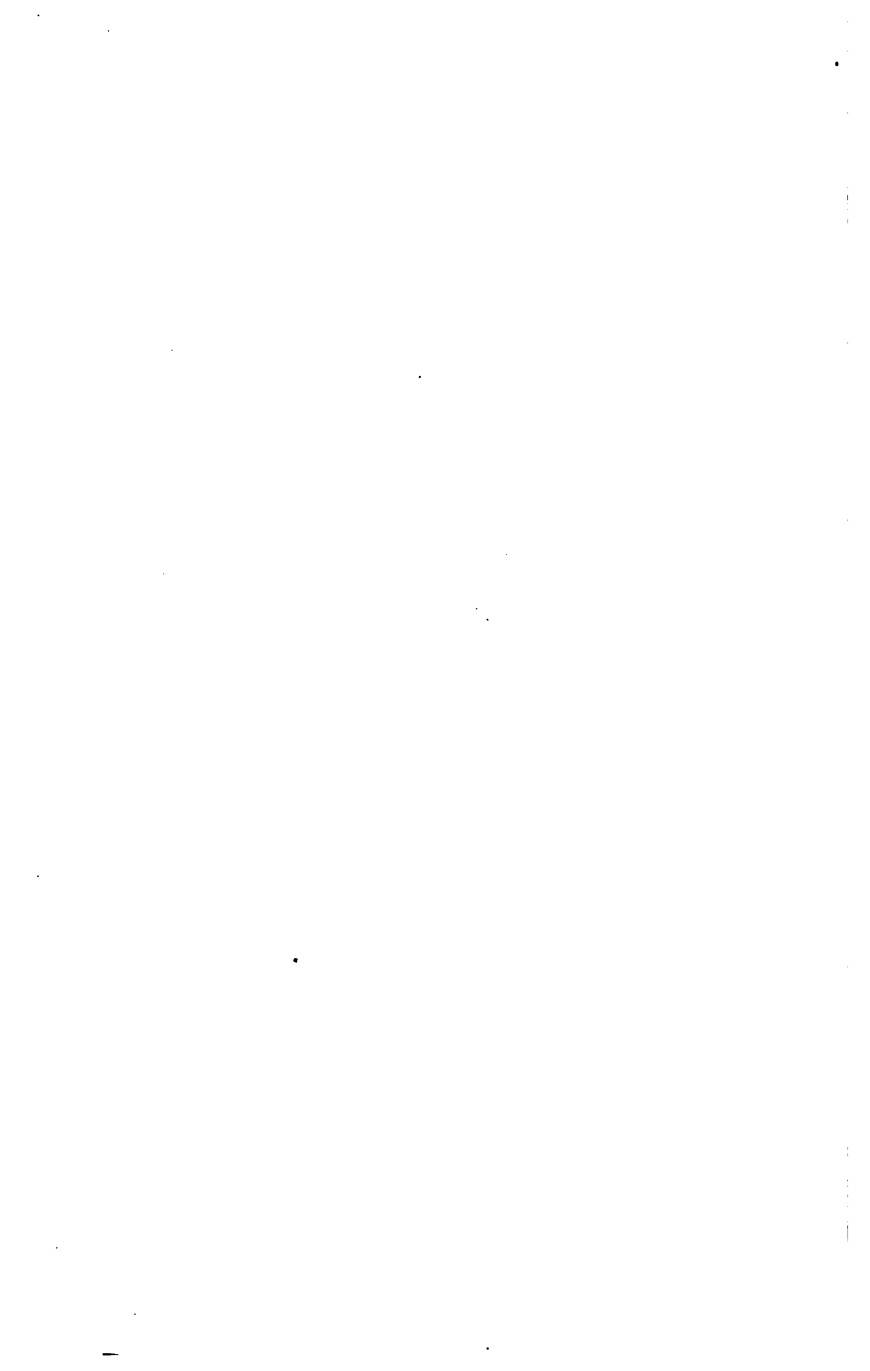
and the presents of ——— and ———.
Bless you, Daddy, and thank them for
me.

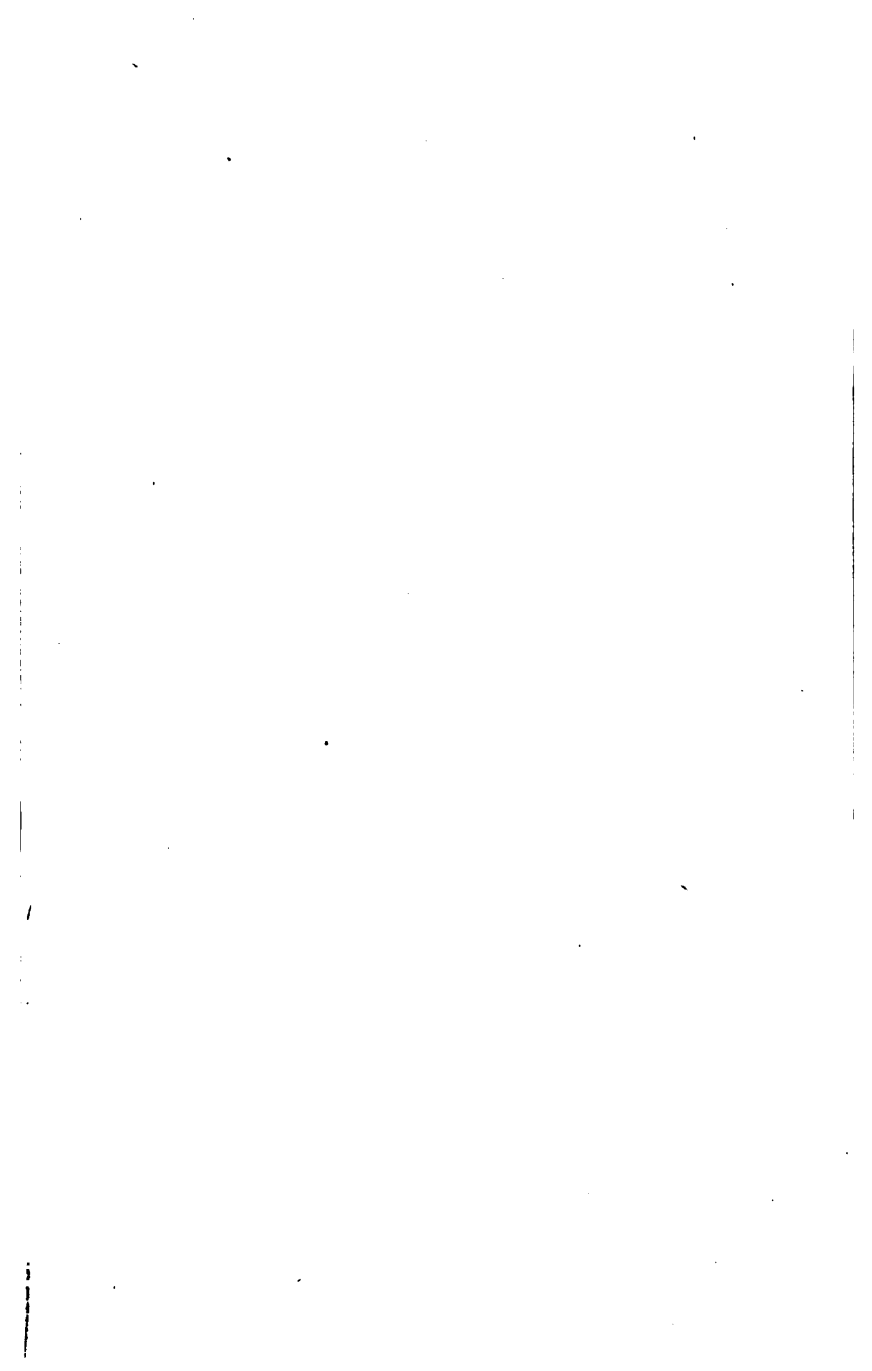
Happy New Year, Daddy,
CURTIS.

THE END









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MAY 29 1918



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